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Chapter 1 : Quantitative Methods for Business Student Resources

Study guide to accompany Quantitative methods for business, 3/E Unknown Binding - by John A Lawrence (Author) Be the first to review this item.

Bibliography Definition Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon. The Practice of Social Research. Wadsworth Cengage, ; Muijs, Daniel. Characteristics of Quantitative Research Your goal in conducting quantitative research study is to determine the relationship between one thing [an independent variable] and another [a dependent or outcome variable] within a population. Quantitative research designs are either descriptive [subjects usually measured once] or experimental [subjects measured before and after a treatment]. A descriptive study establishes only associations between variables; an experimental study establishes causality. Quantitative research deals in numbers, logic, and an objective stance. Quantitative research focuses on numeric and unchanging data and detailed, convergent reasoning rather than divergent reasoning [i. Its main characteristics are: The data is usually gathered using structured research instruments. The results are based on larger sample sizes that are representative of the population. The research study can usually be replicated or repeated, given its high reliability. Researcher has a clearly defined research question to which objective answers are sought. All aspects of the study are carefully designed before data is collected. Data are in the form of numbers and statistics, often arranged in tables, charts, figures, or other non-textual forms. Project can be used to generalize concepts more widely, predict future results, or investigate causal relationships. Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or computer software, to collect numerical data. The overarching aim of a quantitative research study is to classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed. Things to keep in mind when reporting the results of a study using quantitative methods: Explain the data collected and their statistical treatment as well as all relevant results in relation to the research problem you are investigating. Interpretation of results is not appropriate in this section. Report unanticipated events that occurred during your data collection. Explain how the actual analysis differs from the planned analysis. Explain your handling of missing data and why any missing data does not undermine the validity of your analysis. Explain the techniques you used to "clean" your data set. Choose a minimally sufficient statistical procedure; provide a rationale for its use and a reference for it. Specify any computer programs used. Describe the assumptions for each procedure and the steps you took to ensure that they were not violated. When using inferential statistics, provide the descriptive statistics, confidence intervals, and sample sizes for each variable as well as the value of the test statistic, its direction, the degrees of freedom, and the significance level [report the actual p value]. Avoid inferring causality, particularly in nonrandomized designs or without further experimentation. Use tables to provide exact values; use figures to convey global effects. Keep figures small in size; include graphic representations of confidence intervals whenever possible. Always tell the reader what to look for in tables and figures. When using pre-existing statistical data gathered and made available by anyone other than yourself [e. Wadsworth Cengage, ; Brians, Craig Leonard et al. Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods. Longman, ; McNabb, David E. Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. Sharpe, ; Quantitative Research Methods. Colorado State University; Singh, Kultar. Quantitative Social Research Methods. Basic Research Design for Quantitative Studies Before designing a quantitative research study, you must decide whether it will be descriptive or experimental because this will dictate how you gather, analyze, and interpret the results. A descriptive study is governed by the following rules: An experimental design includes subjects measured before and after a particular treatment, the sample population may be very small and purposefully chosen, and it is intended to establish causality between variables. Introduction The introduction to a quantitative study is

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usually written in the present tense and from the third person point of view. It covers the following information: Identifies the research problem -- as with any academic study, you must state clearly and concisely the research problem being investigated. Reviews the literature -- review scholarship on the topic, synthesizing key themes and, if necessary, noting studies that have used similar methods of inquiry and analysis. Note where key gaps exist and how your study helps to fill these gaps or clarifies existing knowledge. Describes the theoretical framework -- provide an outline of the theory or hypothesis underpinning your study. If necessary, define unfamiliar or complex terms, concepts, or ideas and provide the appropriate background information to place the research problem in proper context [e. Methodology The methods section of a quantitative study should describe how each objective of your study will be achieved. Be sure to provide enough detail to enable the reader can make an informed assessment of the methods being used to obtain results associated with the research problem. The methods section should be presented in the past tense. Study population and sampling -- where did the data come from; how robust is it; note where gaps exist or what was excluded. Note the procedures used for their selection; Data collection -- describe the tools and methods used to collect information and identify the variables being measured; describe the methods used to obtain the data; and, note if the data was pre-existing [i. If you gathered it yourself, describe what type of instrument you used and why. Note that no data set is perfect--describe any limitations in methods of gathering data. Data analysis -- describe the procedures for processing and analyzing the data. If appropriate, describe the specific instruments of analysis used to study each research objective, including mathematical techniques and the type of computer software used to manipulate the data. Results The finding of your study should be written objectively and in a succinct and precise format. In quantitative studies, it is common to use graphs, tables, charts, and other non-textual elements to help the reader understand the data. Make sure that non-textual elements do not stand in isolation from the text but are being used to supplement the overall description of the results and to help clarify key points being made. Further information about how to effectively present data using charts and graphs can be found here. Statistical analysis -- how did you analyze the data? What were the key findings from the data? The findings should be present in a logical, sequential order. Describe but do not interpret these trends or negative results; save that for the discussion section. The results should be presented in the past tense. Discussion Discussions should be analytic, logical, and comprehensive. The discussion should meld together your findings in relation to those identified in the literature review, and placed within the context of the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The discussion should be presented in the present tense. Interpretation of results -- reiterate the research problem being investigated and compare and contrast the findings with the research questions underlying the study. Did they affirm predicted outcomes or did the data refute it? Description of trends, comparison of groups, or relationships among variables -- describe any trends that emerged from your analysis and explain all unanticipated and statistical insignificant findings. Discussion of implications -- what is the meaning of your results? Highlight key findings based on the overall results and note findings that you believe are important. How have the results helped fill gaps in understanding the research problem? Limitations -- describe any limitations or unavoidable bias in your study and, if necessary, note why these limitations did not inhibit effective interpretation of the results. Conclusion End your study by summarizing the topic and provide a final comment and assessment of the study. Summary of findings -- synthesize the answers to your research questions. Do not report any statistical data here; just provide a narrative summary of the key findings and describe what was learned that you did not know before conducting the study. Recommendations -- if appropriate to the aim of the assignment, tie key findings with policy recommendations or actions to be taken in practice. Doing Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences: Competencies for Analysis and Applications. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall, ; Hector, Anestine. Bates College; Nenty, H. Basic Inquiry of Quantitative Research. Strengths of Using Quantitative Methods Quantitative researchers try to recognize and isolate specific variables contained within the study framework, seek correlation, relationships and causality, and attempt to control the environment in which the data is collected to avoid the risk of variables, other than the one being studied, accounting for the

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relationships identified. Among the specific strengths of using quantitative methods to study social science research problems: Allows for a broader study, involving a greater number of subjects, and enhancing the generalization of the results; Allows for greater objectivity and accuracy of results. Generally, quantitative methods are designed to provide summaries of data that support generalizations about the phenomenon under study. Sharpe, ; Singh, Kultar. Limitations of Using Quantitative Methods Quantitative methods presume to have an objective approach to studying research problems, where data is controlled and measured, to address the accumulation of facts, and to determine the causes of behavior. As a consequence, the results of quantitative research may be statistically significant but are often humanly insignificant. Some specific limitations associated with using quantitative methods to study research problems in the social sciences include: Quantitative data is more efficient and able to test hypotheses, but may miss contextual detail; Uses a static and rigid approach and so employs an inflexible process of discovery; The development of standard questions by researchers can lead to "structural bias" and false representation, where the data actually reflects the view of the researcher instead of the participating subject; Results provide less detail on behavior, attitudes, and motivation; Researcher may collect a much narrower and sometimes superficial dataset; Results are limited as they provide numerical descriptions rather than detailed narrative and generally provide less elaborate accounts of human perception; The research is often carried out in an unnatural, artificial environment so that a level of control can be applied to the exercise.

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